



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

The end of the idea of shared peace—what does the withdrawal of the UN mean?



The United Nations is undertaking the largest reduction in peacekeeping operations in thirty years. Between 13,000 and 14,000 military and police personnel will be withdrawn from nine active missions over the coming months.

This represents a **reduction** of about 25 per cent of total capacity, effectively returning responsibility for peace to countries that lack both the means and the political stability to manage it.

The decision is not unexpected, but the timing is significant. When a system that has formed the basis of global security for decades weakens due to lack of funding, it becomes a political issue rather than a fiscal one.

American withdrawal from the role of guarantor

A Reuters report **confirmed** that the United States, the single largest funder of peacekeeping operations, owes more than \$2.8 billion. In September, it suspended a further \$800 million intended for the current year.

The US contribution accounts for more than a quarter of the total UN peacekeeping **budget**, which for 2024/2025 is \$5.6 billion—eight per cent less than the previous year. When this foundation weakens, the entire system loses stability.

America no longer finances peace as a public good but instead measures it by domestic political cost

A legislative cap in Washington limiting the maximum US **contribution** to 25 per cent of the UN's global budget has been the subject of controversy for years but has now become a mechanism for reducing leverage.

America no longer finances peace as a public good but instead measures it by domestic political cost. This marks a fundamental change in the attitude towards multilateralism:

global peace is no longer an obligation but an option.

Missions left without a safety net

The withdrawals will first affect missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Lebanon, the Central African Republic, the Golan Heights, Kosovo, Cyprus, Western Sahara, and the Abyei region.

In Congo, MONUSCO is already under local pressure to withdraw; now it will be a coercive process rather than a political agreement. In South Sudan, where peacekeepers have prevented renewed violence, any drawdown increases the risk of the agreement collapsing.

The common denominator of all these missions is clear: where the UN withdraws, another actor steps in

UNIFIL in Lebanon operates at the intersection of the military and diplomacy. Fewer troops mean a thinner layer of trust between Israel and Lebanese structures and more opportunity for an incident to escalate.

The common denominator of all these missions is clear: where the UN withdraws, another actor steps in. New actors—local militias, private security groups, intelligence missions—rarely have the same mandate and rules.

Remodelling without consensus

In New York, there is **talk** of "restructuring", but this is a euphemism for the loss of global support. The UN Secretariat plans to retain some staff through political offices and advisory teams, but without forces on the ground, such offices would serve largely a symbolic role.

Attempts to fill the financial gap through other members face limitations. China is **participating** in peacekeeping operations on a larger scale than before but is not yet prepared to take on the American share.

This is a transition to a new phase of international relations—one in which stability is no longer a shared priority

European countries already **cover** more than 30 per cent of the budget and cannot unilaterally compensate for the shortfall.

This is not a temporary reduction in costs but a transition to a new phase of international relations—one in which stability is no longer a shared priority.

While the UN is reducing missions, regional organisations and individual powers are taking on the role of mediators, but without the institutional control and accountability mechanisms that peacekeeping missions, however slow, still provided.

The new geography of power

The UN decision alters the balance between institutional and ad hoc solutions.

On the African continent, the African Union and ECOWAS are already attempting to establish their own peacekeeping arrangements, but without stable funding and global logistics, they can hardly sustain longer operations.

In Asia, where the military presence of China and its allies is increasing, the UN's multilateral framework is becoming secondary to bilateral security agreements.

This shifts global security from the sphere of law to the sphere of agreement

In the Middle East, the reduction in the UN presence will be used as an opportunity to expand the influence of Iran, Turkey and Russia—each pursuing its own interests, but without shared rules.

This shifts global security from the sphere of law to the sphere of agreement. Instead of norms, power relations prevail; instead of observers wearing blue helmets, there are actors who answer only to their own centres of power.

Less peace, more control

The current plan, if fully implemented, will result in the UN having the lowest number of peacekeepers in three decades by mid-2026.

This does not mean the world will become directly more warlike, but it does mean that future conflicts will last longer, without external pressure to end them.



The current plan, if fully implemented, will result in the UN having the lowest number of peacekeepers in three decades by mid-2026 - Antonio Guterres

Peacekeeping missions could not resolve conflicts, but they kept them below the threshold of escalation. Removing that threshold increases the frequency of violent cycles and slows down international responses.

For countries accustomed to relying on the UN as a guarantee of minimal stability, this marks the end of an era. For the great powers, it is a return to a world where every crisis becomes

an opportunity for positioning.

In such a world, institutions lose authority, and security becomes a private currency—available only to those who can pay for it.

What began as a budget decision has become an indicator of the real attitude towards the international order. The UN lost its funding not because it is expensive, but because the most powerful countries no longer wish to pay for a shared framework for peace.

This is not a technical cut but evidence that the multilateral model after the Cold War has lost its political significance.

Peace is no longer a public good. It has become a private expense for states that still have the resources to pay for it.